

Dear Thomas County Educator,

As you continue planning for the 2007-2008 school year, I want to invite and encourage you and your students to take an active part in the upcoming **100th Birthday Celebration** of the **Thomas County Courthouse** scheduled for **Friday, November 30, 2007**. It is my hope that you will choose to become personally involved in the commemorative celebration of this special event in the history of our county and share it with others in the community.

To assist you in planning your participation, a list of suggested educational activities offering a number of cross-curricular ideas is included. As an experienced educator, you will also have many ideas of your own which can be developed into fun, educational activities for your students as they experience this historic event. As you select possible projects for your classes, please keep in mind that many valuable resources are available for your use at the Prairie Museum of Art & History. The museum staff is always happy to assist you.

Sincerely,

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TEACHING THE THOMAS COUNTY COURTHOUSE

The wise man preserves that which he celebrates and celebrates that which he preserves.

Old Adage

FOR THE TEACHER

Buildings identify a place. Landmarks in our communities tell us who we are and where we are. The following activities invite and encourage students to learn more about the Thomas County Courthouse. Most students travel about their town without thinking about the architecture and history of the houses and buildings they encounter. An in-depth study of the courthouse should foster an appreciation of that building and provide lasting community connections while creating better citizens.

Decide whether you will visit the courthouse as a class field trip or if students will visit individually as part of an independent homework assignment. If you are interested in a tour, please contact Shelly Harms, Thomas County Clerk, or if you want to interview specific officials, please contact them for convenient times.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will sharpen their powers of observation and develop research skills.
- Students will learn to become “tuned in” to their local environment and will learn more about local history and architecture.
- Students will learn that each building is unique and has a story to tell.

Buildings identify a place. Their style, design, age, history, materials and relationship to each other make your community a special place, unlike any other in the world! For example, the Golden Gate Bridge is located only in San Francisco, California. The only place you can visit the White House is in Washington, D.C. The state capitol building in Topeka is different from the other 49 state capitol buildings. The Thomas County Courthouse is distinctive, too. The buildings around us make our community unique and special.

“The need to know our place is a basic human need, especially in an era in which one place seems pretty much like any other. While there is some comfort in knowing that we can find the fast food strip anywhere in the United States and know what we are getting, we have lost something more important in not really knowing where we are. Is it any wonder that we have spent the last couple of decades increasingly pondering who we are as a people when we cannot even recognize the uniqueness of the places that created each of us.” Donald Drake

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

MAPPING

Locate where you are on a map: World, U. S., Kansas, Colby, Brewster, Rexford.

Locate the Thomas County Courthouse on the Colby map.

Find the courthouse on the Sanborn Maps.

Create a map of your trip to the courthouse. ***WALK Around the Block** pgs. 12 & 42

Draw, use graph paper, or construct your field trip in 3-dimensional form.

Locate other important buildings on the map. ***WALK Around the Block** pg. 8

Locate other buildings on the National Register in Thomas County.

MATH

Count the windows in the courthouse.

Estimate the height of the courthouse.

Mirror Math activity (upper middle school and high school level) ***BOX CITY** pgs. 125-127

What is a benchmark? Find the one on the courthouse.

Measure the courthouse.

Figure square footage of the courthouse.

Draw a floor plan of the courthouse.

Are there repeated patterns or shapes on the building's exterior?

ART

Use a *Visual Survey* form to assess the architecture of the courthouse. ***WALK Around the Block** pg. 46

Find the different forms or shapes found on the courthouse's exterior.

Draw or paint the courthouse.

Construct a three-dimensional courthouse model.

Create a courthouse postcard series.

Photograph the courthouse from different angles.

Create an exhibit or collage on the courthouse.

Make a rubbing of the brickwork, National Register Plaque, benchmark, and/or cornerstone.

Create a bulletin board of students' building sketches and rubbings.

Create a mural of your town as it looked 100 years ago.

Research the architect, J.C. Holland.

Prepare a mural depicting 100 years in Thomas County.

HISTORY

What was it like living in 1907? Research the time period.

Visit the Prairie Museum and examine the Panorama of Colby taken from the courthouse in 1907.

1907-2007---What has happened in those 100 years?

LANGUAGE ARTS

Write a letter to the Commissioners asking to visit the courthouse. ***WALK Around the Block** pg. 40

Research the obituaries of people holding office in the courthouse in 1907. Find the locations of their graves.

Write a biography of someone connected with the courthouse.

Have the students interview senior citizens about their memories of the courthouse.

Write a play about a typical day in our community 100 years ago.

Write a description of the outside...inside of the courthouse.

CITIZENSHIP

Discuss the importance of preserving our community's historic buildings.

What would our community lose if these historic buildings were destroyed?

Invite an architect or builder to class to discuss his/her career.

Invite a longtime resident to class to discuss the community's past.

Create a list of questions to ask people who work at the courthouse.

Adopt the courthouse.

What can you do to help preserve the courthouse?

Interview the elected officials in the courthouse. What are their jobs?

What do you think the future holds for the courthouse?

How would the loss of the courthouse affect our community?

TECHNOLOGY

Create a brochure on the courthouse.

Create a poster.

Create a timeline of Thomas County, 1907-2007.

Create podcasts on the buildings on the National Register.

JUST FOR FUN

Plan a classroom birthday celebration complete with cake (don't forget 100 candles!), ice cream, balloons, noisemakers, and confetti. Design and make birthday cards to deliver to the county commissioners and courthouse employees. Discuss what would make an appropriate gift for the courthouse's birthday.

*Teachers interested in using materials from either the **WALK Around the Block** or **Box City** resource manuals may contact the Prairie Museum. Cited pages can be faxed to your school for classroom use, if requested. Teachers are also welcome to visit the Prairie Museum to use these resource materials.

Sources:

National Register of Historic Places www.nps.gov/history/nr/

Center for Understanding the Built Environment, Kansas City www.cubekc.org

National Park Service, "Teaching with Historic Places" www.nps.gov/history/nr/twhp/

Kansas State Historical Society www.kshs.org